

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2289
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 5009

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, NNSC, AO, ZA, WA, SF
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: FOURIE SATISFIED SOUTH AFRICAN OPERATIONS ENDED

REFS: (A) STATE 217801 (B) LUSAKA 3009 (C) STATE 217802

1. I SAW BRAND FOURIE SUNDAY MORNING AND GAVE HIM RUNDOWN ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AS SEEN BY US, NOTING OUR BELIEF THAT KAUNDA AND CHONA WERE SINCERE IN THEIR DESIRE TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL NAMIBIAN SETTLEMENT AND OUR FEELING THAT THEY WERE PROBABLY ALSO SINCERE IN THEIR CLAIM THAT THEY PERSONALLY WERE NOT AWARE OF SWAPO'S INTENTIONS TO ATTACK KATIMA MALITO. I EXPLAINED THE BACKGROUND TO ZAMBIA'S CANCELLATION YESTERDAY OF ITS CALL FOR A SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING AND EXPRESSED THE NEW CONCERN WE HAD AT THE REPORTED CONTINUATION, AS OF LATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, OF SADF MILITARY ACTIVITY IN ZAMBIA. (AS RESULT OF CALL FROM AF/S DESK
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OFFICER ALERTING ME TO REF B, I HAD CALLED FOURIE'S DEPUTY HANS VAN DALSEN, ABOUT 2330 LAST NIGHT TO REPORT CHONA'S COMPLAINT ABOUT SADF AIR AND GROUND ATTACKS NEAR VILLAGE OF SHATUTWA, AND I REPEATED THIS TO FOURIE WHO GAVE NO SIGN OF HAVING BEEN INFORMED OF MY CALL TO VAN DALSEN.) FINALLY, I NOTED THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE AND SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR SOLE AND OUR CONCERN AT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN

SOLE'S INFORMATION THAT SAG ACTION HAD ENDED ON AUGUST 24 AND OTHER INDICATIONS THAT IT HAD GONE ON BEYOND THAT.

2. FOURIE APPRECIATED MY LAYING IT ALL OUT, AND SAID FIRST OF ALL THAT SOLE HAD BEEN A BIT TOO FAST OFF THE MARK WHEN HE CONVEYED HIS MILITARY ATTACHE'S REPORT THAT THE OPERATION HAD BEEN ENDED. WHAT HAPPENED, FOURIE SAID, WAS THAT THE OPERATION HAD BEEN PRETTY MUCH COMPLETED THAT MORNING (THURS AUG 24) AND SOUTH AFRICA TROOPS WERE WITHDRAWING WHEN THEY WERE ATTACKED AGAIN AND FIRED ON BY ANOTHER GROUP OF SWAPO FORCES ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON. THIS APPARENTLY EXTENDED THE OPERATION. HOWEVER, THE ASSURANCES PASSED ON TO ECKSTEEN SATURDAY WERE CORRECT. I ASKED JUST WHEN THE OPERATION HAD ENDED, HAVING IN MIND THAT FOURIE HAD GIVEN SIR DAVID SCOTT SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR INFORMATION ON FRIDAY MORNING. FOURIE SAID HE COULD NOT PINPOINT AN EXACT TIME, BUT THAT THE OPERATION HAD CLEARLY ENDED BY THE TIME ECKSTEEN HAD SEEN MCHENRY.

3. RECALLING CHONA'S REFERENCE TO AIR ATTACKS, I ASKED FOURIE IF THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY THAT TROOPS HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN BUT THAT AIR ACTIVITY HAD CONTINUED; AND I ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY AIR ATTACKS. FOURIE REPLIED THAT ALL OPERATIONS HAD BEEN ENDED. HE SAID HE HAD PUT THESE QUESTIONS TO GENERAL MALAN AFTER THE STATE FUNERAL YESTERDAY AND MALAN HAD CONFIRMED THAT THE OPERATION WAS OVER AND SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO BOMBING OR OTHER ATTACKS BY AIRCRAFT. FOURIE NOTED THAT THIS

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DID NOT OF COURSE EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF AIR RECONNAISSANCE (NOTE: REASON FOR FOURIE'S APPROACH TO MALAN WAS TO RESPOND TO BRITISH SUGGESTION THAT ONE WAY OF HEADING OFF ZAMBIA'S CALL FOR UNSC MEETING WAS TO ISSUE SOME SORT OF STATEMENT THAT THE OPERATION HAD CEASED.) FOURIE ALSO ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SADF CONTINUED TO TAKE THE POSITION THAT IF SWAPO ATTACKED THEM AGAIN THEY WOULD RETALIATE.

4. I HAD PREFACED MY REMARKS ABOUT CHONA'S LATEST COMPLAINT BY RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION AND TIMING, AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT CHONA'S INFORMATION COULD BE INCORRECT OR NOT AS UP TO THE MINUTE AS NECESSARY. NONETHELESS, GIVEN OUR BELIEF THAT WE ALL WANTED TO MOVE ON THE THE SAME GOAL, I FELT I SHOULD PASS IT ON SO THERE SHOULD BE NO MISTAKES MADE ON EITHER SIDE, ONCE MORE EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR GETTING ON WITH THE STEELEMEN PROPOSAL AND OVERCOMING THE FEAR AND DISTRUST ON BOTH SIDES. I ALSO GAVE HIM A COPY OF OUR AUGUST 25 PRESS STATEMENT (REF C) WHICH REINFORCED THESE POINTS AND MADE FAVORABLE REFERENCE TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S STATEMENT OF AUGUST 24.

5. FOURIE DID NOT QUESTION SINCERITY OF KAUNDA OR CHONA AND NOTED THAT DFA'S RECENT MESSAGE TO EACH OF THE WESTERN FIVE,

AMBASSADORS (PRETORIA 5007) HAD SPECIFICALLY AND ADVISABLY MADE REFERENCES TO THE ZAMBIAN MILITARY AND POLICE AUTHORITIES RATHER THAN TO THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL. HE SEEMED CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, IN ASSURANCES HE HAD RECEIVED FROM GENERAL MALAN THAT TO KATIMA MULITO COUNTERACTION WAS OVER. HE NOTED THAT WHOLE AFFAIR, ESPECIALLY DEATHS OF TEN SA SOLDIERS, SHOWED HOW SENSITIVE AN ISSUE THIS WAS IN SA PUBLIC.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 5009

6. I HAVE SHARED SOME OF FOREGOING WITH UK AMBASSADOR AND WE AGREE THERE IS PROBABLY NOT MUCH NEW INFORMATION THE PRETORIA FIVE TO COMPARE NOTES ON BEFORE TOMORROW. IF SADF ACTION HAS INDEED ENDED, CHONA SHOULD KNOW BY NOW. IF CHONA HAD HARD EVIDENCE OF SADF AIR ACTIVITY AS OF LATE AUGUST 26, WE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS REASON TO QUESTION SAG WORD. MEANWHILE MAJOR GENERAL GOLDENHUYS HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT IN NAMIBIA THAT THE KATIMA MULITO COUNTERACTION HAS BEEN COMPLETED.

7. THE AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE "RAPPORT" THIS MORNING GIVES HEAVY COVERAGE TO THE DAMAGE INFLICTED TO SWAPO INSTALLATIONS IN ZAMBIA, NOTING THAT "HUNDREDS" OF TERRORISTS WERE KILLED. IT SAYS BASES SUPPORTING A FORCE OF SOME 750 MEN WERE WIPED OUT IN ACTIVITY THAT WENT ON OVER THE WEEKEND. MOST OF THE STORY

SEEMS TO BE BASED ON REPORTS FROM ZAMBIAN SOURCES WHICH SAY
THE COUNTERACTION WAS LARGER THAN THE CASSINGA RAID. THE PAPER
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QUOTES DEFENSE MINISTER P.W. BOTHA AS SAYING THAT THE "NECESSARY
STEPS" WHICH WERE PROMISED AGAINST SWAPO RAIDERS HAVE NOT
BEEN TAKEN, AND WARNING NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF THE CON-
SEQUENCES OF ALLOWING CROSS-BORDER ATTACKS.

9. COMMENT:

A. THE KATIMA MULITO COUNTERACTION MAY WELL BE OVER, BUT THERE IS
CLEARLY NO GUARANTEE AGAINST FURTHER MAJOR RETALIATORY ACTION
IN THE EVENT OF FURTHER ATTACKS BY SWAPO ON SADF FORCES OR
INSTALLATIONS. WHILE THE DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS APPRECIATES
THE VALUE OF RESTRAINT, IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THE SADF DOES, AND
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SOME LEEWAY EXISTS FOR THE LATTER TO ENGAGE
IN AT LEAST LOCAL RETALIATION WHEN AN ATTACK OCCURS.

B. THE PRESS STORIES OF VIGOROUS ACTION (WHETHER FROM ZAMBIAN
PRESS SOURCES OR ELSEWHERE) HELP MEET THE PUBLIC SENSE OF
OUTRAGE AND DEMAND FOR SOMETHING FORCEFUL ENOUGH TO SHOW OUTSIDE
ENEMIES THAT SOUTH AFRICANS CANNOT BE HIT WITH IMPUNITY. COPING
WITH THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED IS OFTEN A STRONGER POLITICAL
IMPERATIVE FOR THE SAG THAN RESTRAINT.
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